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PROFESSOR BUTCHER AT CAMBRIDGE

BY WILLIAM FENWICK HARRIS
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In 1904 Professor Butcher delivered in Cambridge, in the course founded by Mr. Gardiner M. Lane in honor of his father, Professor George M. Lane, of blessed memory, the addresses later published as *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*. The *Classical Journal* has asked me to give a brief account of the impressions left in Cambridge by the visitor. This is a task both easy and grateful; few strangers have come to Cambridge and in so short a time spent there have made so many admiring and abiding friendships as did Professor Butcher. Boston and Cambridge are thoroughly be-lectured; all the time we feel in regard to lecturers as did the younger Pliny when he wrote of spring poets "magnum proventum poetarum annus hic attulit. Toto mense Aprili nullus fere dies quo non recitaret aliquis." And in many cases I fear times have not changed: "ad audiendum pigre coitur." The lecturers come and go, and generally speaking, leave "but a pin's prick on the chart of memory," and "there an end." But the visit of Professor Butcher stands out in the recollection of many like a good deed in a naughty world; it was to us what must have been to Lowell and to Norton the season spent in Cambridge years ago by A. H. Clough when he was revising the translation of Plutarch's *Lives*.

There was a charm about Butcher that appealed to everyone. Perhaps the greatest element of that charm came from his very great interest in everything human; all his windows were open on the world about him. He was keenly alert to all that was doing: the politics of the country, the ideas of its scholars, the ambitions of its young students, and not least, the fortunes of his compatriots in a new land. This last was shown in the interest he took in the Irish servants he found with his hosts in Cambridge. There was about him none of that condescension in foreigners which got on

Lowell's nerves. He enjoyed himself too much for that. Half a dozen years after his visit he wrote back: "During the early part of this year I had full and interesting letters every week or oftener from my sister during her stay in Boston or Cambridge. All the memories of my visit to Harvard and of the friends I there made revived with fresh force. She and her husband carried away with them gratitude and affection such as have been permanent with me after a much briefer stay than theirs." His visit was very short, but it was astounding how soon one felt he had always known him; there was in him what William James once called the quality of a big brother of humanity. He was scholar, thinker, man of the world, but above all else, an ideal member to represent a university in the parliament of his country. And his value as a Grecian comes from the fact that he was interested in the larger phases of Greek life. The title of his book *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* is characteristic of him. He tried to get to the heart of Greece; he was interested in her originality, her love of knowledge, "which not only seeks out the facts of nature and of man's life, but persistently asks their meaning." His own words about things Greek excellently describe his own mental attitude.

This belief in the interpretative power of mind [he wrote], working on and transmitting all raw material of knowledge, is shown to extend beyond the domain of philosophy or of science; . . . art and inspiration, logic and intuition, elsewhere so often disjoined, enter into perfect union in the constructive efforts of the Greek imagination.

And again:

A fresh and lucid intelligence looks out upon the universe. There is the desire to see each object as it is, to catch it in some characteristic moment of grace or beauty. And the thing seen is not felt to be truly understood until it has taken shape in words, and the exact impression conveyed to the eye has been transmitted to another mind.

And what perhaps gave him his greatest value as a Grecian is described in his own words: "Though each thing, great and small, has its interest, the great and small are not of equal importance."

One of his minor qualities, which stands out, however, in my memory of him as truly characteristic, was his zest, equal to that of Father Herodotus, for a good story. The best minor classic

which he brought to Cambridge was that of an official banquet in Dublin, at which a distinguished scholar sat near the Lord Mayor. The latter, anxious to air a scholarship he did not possess, propounded, "What do you think, sir, of the Latinity of Athenaeus?" The question was skilfully dodged, and so a second time. The third attack was ponderously delivered during a marked pause in general conversation and was not to be avoided. "I think you must say, my dear Lord Mayor," was the answer, "that the Latinity of Athenaeus smacks of Grecisms."

I hope I shall be pardoned for adding a story which Butcher would thoroughly have appreciated—that of the lady with literary aspirations who on meeting Professor Slaughter gushed forth, "I am charmed to meet you, Sir. I have so enjoyed reading your translation of the *Odyssey*!"

All who knew him through pen or personality must feel that in the death of Professor Butcher Greek scholarship has suffered a grievous loss.

*Non omnis moriar; multaque pars mei
vitabit Libitinam; usque ego postera
crescam laude recens; dum Capitolium
scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex . . .*

—Q. HORATIUS FLACCUS.

No more the maiden and the priest
Climb as of old the sacred hill,
The stately ministries have ceased,
The altars are unlit and chill.

Proud roof and pillared hall are low;
Alas! the legions and the ships,
The eagles that disdained the foe,
The trumpets and the silent lips.

But as Bandusia's fountain clear
Might paint the bending ilex tree
And all the careless blooms that peer
Into the water's imagery,

The crystal of the poet's art
Reveals the homely feasts and fires
That cheered the lyric sage's heart,
Sets dancing still his sylvan choirs.

O Tibur of the restless streams,
O Baiae, splendid by the sea,
Apulia, witch'd by boyhood's dreams,
Untouched of time your charm shall be;

For poets have a gift to stay
The flying years that do men wrong,
And we may find lost yesterday
Unshattered in the glass of song.

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